

29 RIGHT AILERON STREET (HOUSE)
Aero Acres Historic District
Middle River
Baltimore County
Maryland

HABS MD-1220
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
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29 RIGHT AILERON STREET (House)

HABS No. MD-1220

- Location:** 29 Right Aileron Street, Middle River, Baltimore County, Maryland
- Significance:** This Cemesto panel prefabricated house was one of 310 built for World War II defense workers in the Aero Acres neighborhood by the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Company.
- Description:** The one-story Cemesto houses developed for Martin Aircraft workers were a 24 by 28 foot rectangle in plan, divided into four and a half rooms – two bedrooms, kitchen/storage room, living room with dining alcove, and bathroom.¹ The communal areas of the house were open plan and featured two large picture windows. The roof was extended to create a covered porch over two-thirds of the front façade. This example is currently covered by vinyl siding, but is one of the few in Aero Acres to retain its original one-story, side-gable form. As described in the Modern Movement in Maryland context study, “the basic house in Aero Acres and Victory Villa was a Cape Cod with modern features, such as large industrial windows, porch latticework, and uncluttered functional interior spaces.”²
- History:** This Cemesto panel prefabricated house was one of 310 built for World War II defense workers in the Aero Acres neighborhood during 1941. There was a great need for worker housing in Middle River because of the rapid growth of the Glenn L. Martin Company aircraft plants. Martin’s payroll went from 17,000 prior to the start of World War II in Europe to 45,000 by November 1941.³ The small town of Middle River, with 161 residents in 1939, and its local building community were unprepared and unequipped to house the massive influx of newcomers.⁴ Aero Acres and Stansbury Estates were the first new worker subdivisions sponsored by the Martin Corporation to start meeting this housing shortfall.

¹ “Houses for Defense,” *Architectural Forum* 75 (November 1941): 322.

² Isabelle Gournay et. al. “Modern Movement in Maryland – Context Essay,” Draft (December 2002), 35.

³ “Houses for Defense,” 322.

⁴ Jack Breihan, “Necessary Visions: Community Planning in Wartime,” *Maryland Humanities* 71 (November 1998): 11.

Celotex Corporation manufactured the Cemesto houses using prefabricated four by twelve foot panels of hard surfaced insulating board. Celotex developed the Cemesto panel in 1936 by sandwiching one to one-and-one-half inch of bagasse (sugar cane) fiber between layers of asbestos cement. Each exterior wall panel was 1 ¾ inch thick and weighed approximately 235 pounds.⁵ The architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill designed the Cemesto houses for Celotex and laid out the stylized airplane street plan for Aero Acres. The streets are still named after airplane parts such as Cockpit, Right Wing Drive, and Fuselage Avenue.

While the Cemesto panels, specialized shingles, and other building elements were prefabricated, the work crews did include a number of subcontractors to build concrete foundation piers, assemble plumbing, and finish interiors. Although somewhat altered and under new redevelopment pressure, Middle River and its former defense worker housing such as 29 Right Aileron Street are noteworthy examples of World War II national defense resources for the homefront.

Sources:

Breihan, Jack, "Necessary Visions: Community Planning in Wartime," *Maryland Humanities* 71 (November 1998): 11-14.

Gournay, Isabelle, et. al. "Modern Movement in Maryland – Context Essay," Draft (December 2002).

"Houses for Defense," *Architectural Forum* 75 (November 1941): 321-326.

Sanborn Map Company, Middle River, Maryland. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1948.

Historian:

Lisa Pfueller Davidson, 2006

**Project
Information:**

This short form history was prepared to supplement photographic documentation of World War II-era resources in Middle River. During 2004-05 HABS staff photographer James Rosenthal photographed a series of sites in Baltimore City and County in preparation for the *Buildings of Maryland* publication. Maryland Historical Trust sponsored the photography project and is producing *Buildings of Maryland* as part of the Society of Architectural Historians' *Buildings of the United States* series with the University of Virginia Press.

⁵ "Houses for Defense," 321.